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The dearth of International Baccalaureate schools across Africa

Abstract

The Geneva-registered International Baccalaureate (IB) celebrated its 50th Anniversary as an organizational entity in 2014, having first appeared in 1964 as the International Schools Examination Syndicate. In January 2015 the 5,000th programme had appeared at a school in Albania. The IB, now offering four programmes, has moved significantly over recent years into state funded schooling, especially in the United States, and Ecuador. At the same time there has been no significant growth in Africa where the operational paradigm remains largely unchanged since the 1980s. The 76 schools in 25 countries located across the continent of Africa in mid-2015 accounted for just 1.8% of all schools worldwide. Twelve countries in Africa had a solitary ‘international school’ offering the IB programmes. This paper is the first to address this situation. This paper reveals the growth and extent of IB activity across Africa, and offers possible reasons for the on-going dearth of schools.

Key words: Africa, international baccalaureate, international schools, Ecuador, Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria.

Introduction

The historical context

The year 2014 was an important marker for the International Baccalaureate (IB). It marked the 50th Anniversary of the IB as an organizational entity. The year 1964 had seen the beginning of the International Schools Examination Syndicate (ISES), a body involved largely in ‘marketing initiatives’ (Hill, 2002 p.25) and which in 1968 officially became the Geneva-based IB Office (IBO). It now seems strange to think that the original concept, envisaged in 1964 by Georges Panchaud, Professor of Education at the University of Lausanne, was for an ‘experiment’ limited to only about a dozen schools (Peterson, 1987: 207). In fact, the initial aim was for this experiment to come ‘under UN control’ after 1975 (see Peterson, 1972: 31). There were 44 IBDP schools in 18 countries in 1977 (Fox, 1985: 61). The number of IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) schools “grew dramatically from 149 in 1982 to 443 by November of 1991 with over 700 by 1997” (Bagnall, 1997: 132).

These figures, although large at the time, now seem miniscule. The IB never did come ‘under UN control’ after 1975 but has grown enormously nevertheless, particularly over the past decade. By March 2012 the IB was officially educating one million children. In early-2004 there were 1,351 IB schools worldwide (Drake, 2004: 190). On 10 March 2015, there were 5,177 programmes being offered worldwide, across 4,069 schools. Both the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and the Middle Years Programme (MYP) had hit the 1,000th mark in February 2013. The combined 4,000th programme had been authorized on 25th June 2011, at the Taihu International School in China. The 5,000th programme had appeared in early-2015, in Albania. Put simply, the IB has “grown at a remarkable rate from a niche provider in the

educational market to a global leader with great and increasingly realistic ambitions” (Alchin, 2011: 39). The IB, now operating four programmes since the vocation-oriented Career-related Programme (IBCP) appeared in 2012 out of three ‘global centres’ (in The Hague, Singapore and Bethesda, Maryland), continues its relentless journey towards meeting its 2006-set target of educating 2.5 million children in 10,000 schools by 2020 (Beard, 2006).

The period since 2002 has been conceptualized by Tarc (2009: 237) as being the IB’s ‘fourth period’ of historical growth and development, epitomized by ‘contemporary moment’ trends such as branding and corporate planning. At the same time, the IB stands out as having a radical mission at its heart, centred around the creating of internationally-minded global citizens who will promote peace and intercultural-understanding: “The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world” (IBO, 2013: 1).

The operational context

Beyond these considerable recent achievements, the IB has always had reservations about its geographical growth and spread; “The IB is constantly questioning its own claim to internationality” (Fox, 1998: 720). The IB’s ‘first period’ of growth and development is termed one of ‘embedded liberalism’ and lasted, according to Tarc’s (2009) framework, between 1962 and 1973. One key architect of the IB already much cited, Alec Peterson, had lamented towards the end of this ‘first period’ the lack of activity in Africa (Peterson, 1972: 104) as one of “two major disappointments in the development of the project so far”, the other issue involved the contact with the former ‘Socialist Countries’. It had seemed initially that some African nations, especially bilingual Cameroon (singled out by Peterson, 1972: 105) would welcome the IB ‘project’. The major conference at Sevres in France in 1967 which had discussed the ‘general

pattern of the proposed examination' (Peterson, 1972: 15) had involved educational experts from 12 different countries, including Cameroon and Tanzania.

Peterson (1972: 104) had initially seemed quite confident about the role of the IBDP in Africa. He had commented that "it seemed possible initially that the establishment of an internationally recognized curriculum and examination...might be of value to the countries of the Third World." Furthermore, such a curriculum would "provide an examination which could be better adapted to Africa needs" and would be "free from any colonial overtones" (Peterson, 1972: 105). The alternative, "that each new country of Africa should set up its own machinery for a university-entrance of its own" seemed 'unduly wasteful of scarce resources' (Peterson, 1972: 105). However, Peterson (1972: 105) had admitted that in spite of visits by IB officers "to both coasts of Africa...no progress has yet been made in this direction.² Peterson (1987: 168) was to later comment that: "The areas which present the biggest problems today in providing a full service of and to IB schools are probably Australia and Africa."

The situation in Africa is probably still 'a major disappointment' as is the post-Soviet bloc of countries, although growth in Australia has since been quite impressive. However, this issue probably requires further comment from the IBO itself. In spite of the initial confident mood, the fact of the matter is that the IB presence in Africa has never exceeded 100 schools and in almost half the countries where there is a presence there is a solitary school. Moreover, the IB's mode of operation in Africa is largely unchanged since the 1970s and 1980s. The IB in Africa still exists in a 'traditional' model of activity; all IB schools in Africa are private, and the vast majority are traditional-type international schools catering for the expatriate community, largely British or American in origin. Many IB schools in Africa still have a totally monopolistic share of the national market, backing up the assertion that "it may well be that International Schools exist mainly in a sort of bubble" (Bates, 2011: 7).

It was commented (Bunnell, 2008: 414) that: “A mere 31 schools are found in Africa (2 percent of world total), compared to the 556 in the US (35 percent of world total)”. Seven years later, in mid-2015, it was true to note that the number of schools in Africa had more than doubled (to 77 schools) but the proportion of schools worldwide in Africa had fallen back slightly, from 2% to 1.8%. Two more African countries had obtained an IB presence (Madagascar in 2013 and Gabon in 2015), yet at least 28 African countries still had no IB presence. I had observed that the whole of Africa in March 2011 had just 14 MYP schools, spread among eight countries (Tanzania had the most with four). By March 2015 this situation was largely unchanged, although four more MYP schools had appeared.

This is all somewhat of an enigma. The IB, especially since its ‘third period’ of growth and development since 1990 epitomized by the ‘ascendency of neoliberal globalization’ (Tarc, 2009: 237), has moved substantially into public schooling, and away from elitist/exclusive/expensive ‘international schools’ in most other parts of the world, and has been shown to grow in clusters as word-of-mouth marketing and economies of scale have taken shape. Over a decade ago it was being said that 55% of IB World Schools were state-funded, whilst only 18% of students attended ‘international schools’ as such (Walker, 2003). As noted by Tarc and Beatty (2012: 341), the IB “has made considerable in-roads into publicly-funded schooling in many educational jurisdictions of the Anglo-West.”

Having set the scene for identifying the situation in Africa as somewhat at odds with other regions of the world, this paper will now explore the lack of IB presence in Africa in more detail. It will be shown that the dearth of schools was never a deliberate plan and a major seminar had occurred in 1984, during the IB’s ‘second period’ (Tarc, 2009) of ‘transitional’ development, to spur growth in Africa. Indeed, as will be shown, the IB was initially quite confident about future growth. This paper will then reveal the current state of play across

Africa, showing the location and types of schools involved. This will be followed by a discussion about the possible, and numerous explanations for the limited presence of schools across Africa. Finally, conclusions will be drawn focusing on the need for further investigation and research into this issue. The stance of this paper needs outlining; this paper does not seek to portray the situation as a ‘problem’ for African nations but rather that it stands out as an oddity, and requires further understanding in the light of IB growth elsewhere in the world.

The IB presence in Africa explored

The initial IB presence in Africa

The comparative lack of IB presence in Africa was not deliberate. The IB had tried hard initially to stir up interest in the project in Africa. Robert Leach, the head of humanities at the International School of Geneva had visited schools in Asia, Africa and Europe in 1961–1962 doing early ‘missionary’ work (Hill 2006). In July 1964, the head of the school in Geneva (Desmond Cole-Baker), accompanied by the head of the primary section (Miss McDowell), had undertaken a further ‘marketing’ tour of three African countries (Liberia, Ghana, and Tanzania: Moshi and Dar-es-Salaam); ‘This led to International School Association advisors being appointed to these schools and a greater awareness of the IB proposal’ (Hill, 2010: 117).

Goodman (1985) had optimistically asserted that the Sub-Saharan countries of Africa offered much scope for the growth of the IB, and that same year Fox (1985: 65) had reported on how United Nations International School (UNIS) in New York “continues to contribute resources and expertise to the growth of the IB” by providing consultants, including one to Africa. At the same time, Fox (1985: 66) had noted that there were concerns held about ‘Euro-centric bias’

in the IB programme. Peterson (1987: 168) had commented on how the IB had secured a grant in 1981 from the Leverhulme Trust to “carry out a comparative study of the upper secondary curricula of Anglophone and francophone schools in West Africa.” The aim of the study was to introduce the IB “on an experimental basis in one school in Senegal and one in Cote d’Ivoire.” At the same time, Drake (2004: 203) had explicitly warned of a danger in encouraging growth of the IB across Africa: “Even with careful adjustment, the introduction of IB programmes to regions such as China, Africa and South America will inevitably produce dissonance and cultural tension.”

Notwithstanding this last remark, the IB had tried early to deal with its obstacles to growth in Africa. The Deputy Director General of the IB Robert Blackburn (1983), who “was committed to African education” (Fox, 1998: 71), had reported on the increasing interest in the IBDP in developing countries but had highlighted several barriers. An African Curriculum Seminar, held after Blackburn had obtained a grant from a Norwegian development agency, was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 27th October to 3rd November 1984, to “study ways in which African thought and culture could be integrated into the IB programme of studies” (Fox, 1998: 71). Here delegates, mainly Kenyan educators “spoke out forcefully on the need for IB syllabuses to give due recognition to the contribution of African culture, for example, by including African literature in the required reading lists for English Language A and by adding oral literature as a genre” (Fox, 1985: 66). The IB had subsequently agreed that it “should attempt to make the IB available to a larger number of countries representing a greater diversity of cultures and pedagogical traditions, notably in countries in the process of development” (Fox, 1985: 66). However, Fox (1998: 72) had a decade later conceded that “the presence of the IB is still minimal in the Middle East and Africa.”

The history of the IB in Africa

The very first school involved with the IB had been in Nigeria. Sometime between 1967 and July 1969 Alec Peterson, acting as Director of the IB Office, had visited nine countries including ‘a swing through Nigeria’ (Peterson, 1987: 27) and had met with teachers in Ibadan (Hill, 2010: 78). He had based his visits on schools which had been identified as ‘possible’ by an earlier tour of schools (Peterson, 1987: 27). The International School of Ibadan subsequently offered some of its students for the third trial examination in 1969 when 13 schools had offered a total of 720 candidates. Presumably Peterson had influenced the school in Ibadan to join the project although it is not known for sure; “It is interesting to speculate how the various schools became involved” (Hill, 2010: 88). The British Schools Montevideo had joined the Ibadan school in 1969, becoming the first IB school in Latin America, and it is said that ‘Peterson visited the school in 1967 to present the fledgling IB project and there was a positive response’ (Hill, 2010: 88). The International School of Ibadan offered a further 39 candidates (out of 601) for the May 1971 examinations session. The school withdrew from the IB in 1992 (Hill, 2010: 91), but rejoined in January 2008.

The ‘first’ school in Africa is officially claimed to be Tanzania’s International School Moshi which had been authorized in January 1977, although as seen above this was not strictly the ‘first’ as it had joined the Ibadan one, followed by United World College of Southern Africa (Swaziland) in October 1979. Furthermore, the school in Moshi was comprised of many Scandinavian students and was backed by the Lutheran Church of America, had apparently ‘adopted the IB in 1973’ (Peterson, 1987 p.80). Of course, at that point in time, 1973, the IBDP was still officially an experiment in international education poised to come under UN(ESCO) control. The International School of Kenya had been authorized in March 1982, followed by Machabeng College (International School of Lesotho) in March 1986, and Casablanca American School in October 1986. The British International School in Cairo was authorized in June 1989. These initial IB schools were joined by partners in eight African countries in the

1990s (Ghana in 1993, Mauritius in 1993, South Africa in 1994, Togo in 1994, Uganda in 1995, Zambia in 1996, Malawi in 1997, and Namibia in 1998). The next countries to have an IB presence were Senegal in 2000, Tunisia in 2000, Angola in 2001, Botswana in 2001, Nigeria in 2004, Zimbabwe in 2004, Mozambique in 2005, Rwanda in 2005, Sudan in 2007, Madagascar in 2013, and Gabon in 2015 (all data obtained from ib.org website).

The current state of the IB in Africa

The IB in mid-2015 had a presence in 25 countries in Africa (out of a recognized 54). Of these 25 countries, 12 had a solitary IB school (see table below). This is unchanged since 2008; “Half the continent remains an IBDP wilderness, whilst 12 African countries there have only one school” (Bunnell, 2008: 418). Not surprising this single school tends to be located in the Capital city. Guy (2011: 144) had noted that “If the 39 IB World Schools are mapped, they directly overlay a simple map of the capital cities on the continent.” West Africa stands out as having particularly little IB presence; only four countries there (Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo) out of 18 had any IB presence, with just 12 schools. This is the only area of Africa that has received any critical comment from the IB itself (see Wallace, 1998) yet little seems to have happened in terms of IB ‘contact’ there over two decades. Only Egypt in mid-2015 had a bloc of more than 10 schools (15 in total). In total there were 120 IB programmes on offer across Africa, but it can be observed from the following table (correct in September 2015) that four countries (Egypt, Kenya, Morocco and Tanzania) account for almost 50% of all the programmes.

TABLE 1 HERE

At the other extreme, the IB in the US has grown enormously; by mid-2015 there were 1,624 IB schools in the USA, representing 39% of all IB schools worldwide. In 2005, 73% of IB schools were in ‘high income countries’ (IBO, 2006). It had been pointed out (Lewis, 2006) that 62% of students who undertook the May 2005 History examination had sat for the History of the Americas paper, but only 0.7% had undertaken the History of Africa one, reflecting a regional imbalance towards America. California alone had 164 schools. Florida had a further 157. Ecuador, a growth ‘hot spot’ for the IB since 2006, had 184 schools in mid-2015, and looked on course to have the second biggest blocs of schools worldwide by about 2018. By contrast, only four countries in Africa have more than five IB schools (Egypt, Morocco, Kenya and Tanzania).

This situation is in direct contrast with Alec Peterson’s (1987: 63) remark on how it was felt in 1967 that “the IB schools should as far as possible be equally spread throughout the world, with no one area predominating.” Peterson (1987: 209) had further commented that: “As far as the IBO is concerned therefore we seem to have arrived at an agreed policy...on maintaining within the organization a cultural and geographical balance.” In 2015 the geographical imbalance could not conceivably be wider.

The lack of IB presence in Africa reveals itself in the IBDP examination sessions. The November 2013 session had seen 388 candidates involved in African schools, out of 10,840 in total. The much bigger May 2013 session had involved 1,766 candidates in schools across Africa, out of 127,284 worldwide (i.e. Africa accounted for just 1.3% of all candidates). The biggest blocs of students had involved Egypt (359 candidates), Kenya (266) and Ghana (183). Twelve countries had less than 50 candidates involved. The African total in May 2013 was very close to that of Hong Kong where 1,807 candidates had been involved. By comparison,

the USA had ‘housed’ 68,219 of the May 2013 examination cohorts (54% of the world share). Canadian schools had a further 9,774 candidates involved.

The biggest African country by population, Nigeria, in 2015 had five IB schools. As noted above, the biggest country by size of economy, South Africa, had three schools. North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco) had 23 schools between them, meaning Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole had 54 IB schools. It should be remembered that this is a part of the world where “it remains the case that over 32 million children remain out of school, only two-thirds of children reach the last grade of primary” (Lewin, 2009: 151). There is also noticeably scant activity in Francophile Africa. Only eight IB schools could be found in mid-2015 in five of the French-speaking nations. Peterson (1987: 63) had implied that the IB had always mainly involved English-speaking nations when he remarked that: “As soon as the IB spread to North America, Asia, and Anglophone Africa, the language problem became more difficult.” The IB had been hopeful of more entry into Morocco (currently has seven schools) where it has been involved in discussions with the Ministry of Education since 2003 (see Hill, 2011: 132). To put these figures mentioned above into a global perspective, consider that the 77 schools in Africa were very close to matching the 78 schools found in the state of Georgia, USA.

The types of IB schools in Africa

All seven of the above-listed ‘pioneer schools’, including the one in Ibadan, are what might be deemed ‘Traditional’ (Hayden and Thompson, 2008: 23) international schools, which had largely appeared as ‘a response to the demands of a growing market of globally mobile workers’ (Cambridge, 2013: 187). This model of school is now termed the ‘Type A’ ‘Traditional’ international schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2013: 6). The ‘Type B’ school tends to be more ideologically involved with the IB, whilst the ‘Type C’ model encompasses

the growing body of for-profit schools operated by commercial operators such as Dubai-based GEMS Education.

Jonietz (1991: 54) in the seminal *1991 Yearbook of Education* which had been the first major attempt at describing the field of international schooling had described the ‘Type A’ model well when she had noted how the “biggest growth area is seen in the number of independent, community-based, English-language of instruction schools offering education to third-culture students.” Hill (2014: 177), had painted a picture of a ‘Type A’ school when recently saying that: “An international school is one established to offer education to the children of globally mobile parents usually working for the United Nations or its agencies, embassies and multinational companies.” This model still seems dominant across most of Africa (although it requires further closer research).

As said already, the IB in Africa has largely never moved beyond this base of activity. To repeat, 12 countries in Africa have a single IB school. All of these schools can be identified as being ‘Type A’ ‘traditional’ international schools. It is worth listing them as evidence, and to aid possible research.

TABLE 2 HERE

As can be seen, nearly all bear the ‘International School’ badge. This fact is significant as it may be affecting the image of the IB, one of several possible explanations for the dearth of the IB in Africa which are to be explored in the next section of this paper.

There is one notable exception in Africa, concerning schools aimed at promoting transformational leadership. Four of the IB schools in Africa (located in Mombasa, Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam) are ‘Aga Khan Academies’, an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network, chaired by His Highness the Aga Khan and with 13 private schools in Kenya alone.

These schools are “designed to provide a challenging education for local children aimed at preparing them to be leaders of their countries in national and international settings”, whilst “the Aga Khan Academies are working closely with the IB” (Horsley, 2011: 65). Another similar project involves The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls’ in South Africa which has been authorized as an MYP school since September 2013.

The IB presence in Africa explained

There are a number of possible reasons (political, financial, technological and pedagogic) for explaining the dearth of the IB across Africa. Peterson (1987: 168) had highlighted a series of issues. He had commented that “the main problem is distance and communications” which was “compounded in Africa by the lack of communication between Anglophone and francophone countries.” Guy (2011: 156) had said that: “a combination of specific underlying factors- affordability, national requirements, pedagogical mismatch or language barriers- is limiting access to quality education and limiting access to an international education.”

Having said earlier that the lack of IB presence in Africa was never *deliberate*, it is arguably correct to state that the IB has never had a high profile in Africa. Firstly, Africa remains part of the wider IB Africa/Europe/Middle East (IBAEM) region, with its headquarters now based in The Hague, Netherlands. From 1986 until 1990 the headquarters were based in London (Hill, 2010: 140), and then the Geneva office began to deal with Africa and the Middle East. In 1991, a full time regional director for Africa and the Middle East was appointed operating from the Cardiff headquarters. This regional office closed in July 1994 when it amalgamated with the Europe one to form the broader-scoped IBAEM office in Geneva. Part-time regional officers were established instead in Jordan and Kenya (Hill, 2010: 141). What this rather complex story

shows, apart from revealing the rather *ad hoc* growth of the IB during the 1990s, is that Africa as an IB region has never had a distinct presence at an organizational level, with responsibility for Africa largely being based in Europe, although Peterson (1987: 167) had said that London was a logical base for dealing with Anglophone Africa.

Furthermore, the IB has seemingly largely avoided direct contact with Africa at a training and networking level. Peterson (1987: 168) had said that it had “not been possible to provide schools in Africa as a whole with anything like the back-up services, such as teacher-training workshops, which have been developed in other parts of the world.” However, the London office between 1986 and 1990 had “been able to provide at least one workshop each year in Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia” (Peterson, 1987: 168). The Heads’ Standing Committee, representing heads of IB schools, was formed in 1977. It held conferences every year, and then every two years from 1990 onwards. The first one in Africa was meant to be held in Nairobi in 1991 but was cancelled due to the Gulf War. A conference was held in Ghana in 2000 “and it attracted a lesser number of participants² (Hill, 2010: 110), about 110 people in fact, “partly due to the longer distances, increased cost, increased time away and apprehension on the part of some that Africa presented potential dangers from malaria and civil unrest” (Hill, 2010: 110). The moral of the story here is that Africa has been largely by-passed as a region for large-scale conferences, giving the impression that it was not important or relevant. The one in Nairobi in 1984 now stands out as being a unique affair in the early years of the IB.

Fox (1998), like Peterson before her in 1972, had seemed quietly confident about the IB in Africa. She had written that one curriculum expert from Nigeria (namely Tunde Oderinde) had “emphasized the potential of the IB as an international model for African countries in the process of discarding the constraints of the European models inherited from colonial times” (Fox, 1998: 72). However, Drone (1988) had already argued the need to introduce a greater

African cultural perspective into ‘the Euro-centric curriculum’, and had offered a plan for incorporating the Kenyan A-Level curriculum with the IBDP. Drake (2004: 194) had been sceptical about such practice, arguing that: “Culturally, these regions (Asia, Africa and South America) are very different from the Eurocentric milieu in which IB programmes were originally developed.” At the same time, Van Oord (2007: 376) had made the comment that: “In the IB community, however, one can still very often hear individuals complain that the IB is ‘too westernized’ or ‘Eurocentric’.”

At the ‘African Seminar’ in Kenya in 1984 “the Eurocentrism of the IB was evident” (Fox, 1998: 71), particularly in regard to English literature where works by African writers were not considered ‘legitimate’ but seen as ‘world literature in translation’ (Fox, 1998: 71). Also, the lack of oral literature as a legitimate literary genre had been raised at the seminar in Kenya. One fairly recent study of IB-published materials (Hahn, 2003) had revealed a Western and American dominance in terms of the language used. Lewis (2006: 53) had openly said “the curricula that we adopt are largely centred upon the perpetuation of an Anglo-American perspective” (Lewis, 2006: 53). In other words, the IB at a content level is still seen as Euro/Anglo-centric and this issue should probably form the basis of further research into the dearth of IB across Africa. Furthermore, in an effort to add cohesion across the different programmes and help put the idealistic mission into practice, the IB developed in 2006 its ‘Learner Profile’ which outlines the ten attributes or ‘outcomes’ of the ‘IB Learner’ (e.g. ‘risk-taker’, ‘open-minded’ and ‘principled’). These outcomes have been seen as “indicative of a western approach to education as opposed to a global approach” (Wells, 2011: 175) and this perhaps offers another potential useful lens of critical analysis when discussing the lack of presence in Africa, especially within a cultural-dissonance context.

Conclusions

Put crudely, the IB seems caught in a ‘time-warp’ in Africa. It seems unable to gain any growth momentum, and unable to move beyond its ‘natural’ and original base of activity; “what some regard as a privileged club” (Walker, 2011: 11). The IB in Africa seems locked in a 1980s paradigm of operational activity, largely in isolated ‘Type A’ ‘Traditional’ international schools. At the same time the IB elsewhere has changed largely beyond recognition; it is expected that just 5% of IB schools by 2020 will be ‘international schools (see the presentation by Beard and Holloway, 2010). Moreover, the IB has no presence at all in state schools in Africa. The IB acknowledges this, and is conscious of this fact: “Where governments are struggling to meet millennium development goals, there is no access to IB programmes in state schools at all; this is the case in Africa” (Guy, 2011: 149). It seems about time that the position of the IB in Africa was investigated, and more widely discussed. This paper offers a starting point for that discussion.

The huge disparity so evident in 2015 between the dearth of IB schools across the whole of Africa (77 schools) and the huge growth in Florida (157 schools), for instance, seems a long-term by-product of the fact that the IB had always wanted to recruit schools “in which no cultural area predominated” but for “pragmatic reasons”, the “first essential was to recruit a sufficiently large and diverse group of schools to demonstrate that the project was feasible and filled a need” (all quotes from Peterson, 1987: 65). The IB has never been in control of its growth and geographical dispersion since it has always relied on word-of-mouth marketing and internal ‘critical mass’ expansion (e.g. growth in a concentrated region leads to internal economies of scale which leads to training costs falling).

The exception has been where there is state support. The huge and sudden growth of the IBDP in Ecuador, set to become soon the IB’s second biggest area of activity, has come about largely

since 2006 through the support of the President, Rafael Correa, and his endorsement of ‘Socialism of the 21st Century’, which advocates active and critical-thinking citizenship (Eaton, 2013). Under Correa’s presidency the IBDP is set by 2018 to be found in one-third (about 500) of Ecuador’s secondary schools as part of a second wave of schools (see research report by Barnett, 2013). Could such an endorsement come from an African leader?

Putting political shifts aside, there is still potential that the IB programmes might grow in Africa. The IB Deputy Director General Ian Hill (2006) had openly stated that the cost of the IBDP was a factor hindering its spread in developing countries, including Africa. He later specifically identified the annual cost of membership as a barrier: “The only factor that sometimes prevented a school, particularly in a developing country, from adopting the IB was the cost of approximately 10,000 Swiss Francs per annum, which was agreed...in 1977” (Hill, 2010: 119). Of course, training costs might be another barrier. One plausible future scenario might be to see schools in Africa that cannot afford to offer the IBDP in its entirety buying into one or two courses offered online by authorized ‘IB Open Schools’. It had been said over a decade ago (Walker, 2002), with direct reference to the IB in Africa, that this type of partnership school could be known as an ‘IB Partner School’, with its own logo and visual identity. Alternatively, the emergence in 2012 of the IBCP (currently not on offer in any school in Africa) might solve the cost issue whilst also offering more appeal to African nations keen to promote economic growth; “it is unquestionable that the addition of a vocational strand to the IB would make it far more attractive to developing world educational leaders who are interested in offering a curriculum that would best prepare their students for the future” (Bagnall, 1997: 142).

One country that might perhaps attract more disappointment than others is South Africa. The first IB school, the American International School of Johannesburg had appeared there in 1994 but has since been joined by just two others. Why has the IB not grow further in the post-Apartheid period since 1994? The emphasis placed by the IB philosophy on *tolerance*, as particularly exemplified in the Learner Profile (Van Oord, 2013) through the attributes and learning outcome described as ‘balanced’ might be a counter-force to dealing with issues of violence in South Africa’s schools (see by Le Roux and Mokhele, 2011).

This paper has introduced a new area of discussion regarding the continued growth of the IB programmes; the growing disparity between IB activity in high-income and low-income countries. Guy (2011: 144) had concluded that ‘regional disparities (of the IB) and geographical inequalities often determine the profile of educational opportunity and conversely educational disadvantage.’ Putting the anomaly of Ecuador aside, the IB continues in 2015 its staggering growth in high-income English-speaking countries (although the IB is in serious decline in state schools in the United Kingdom) especially in North America. Three notable areas of the world seem to defy penetration; the Middle East, Africa and the post-Socialist newly independent nations. This issue goes all the way back to Peterson’s ‘two disappointments’ comment in 1972.

However, the extent to which the situation in Africa is a ‘problem’ or potential area of ‘concern’ for the IB requires more discussion and research. What is the view of the IB itself on this issue? Is it still ‘disappointed’? Official IB documentation (e.g. IBO, 2013: 1) talks about “the IB’s commitment to creating a collaborative, global community united by a mission to make a better world through education.” The notion of creating a truly ‘global community’ of schools is a seemingly vital one for the IB. Presumably therefore, the lack of IB presence in Africa is a matter of concern. Moreover, is the lack of presence of IB programmes a ‘problem’ or

‘concern’ for African nations? This requires further comment and probably requires an analysis that breaks-down the continent into regions and maybe individual nation-states.

The overall changing geography of the IB demands further critical investigation. This paper has intended to offer initial hypotheses that may ground subsequent research into the matter in an African context. Bagnall (2010: 58) had noted that ‘the development of the IB program in North America has raised a number of questions’, and added that the situation had created an ‘imbalance which warrants explanation.’ The reverse is also true; the *lack* of IB presence in Africa is equally worthy of explanation and research attention.

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